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Bordeaux, Washington: A Historic Thurston County Ghost Town **$5.00**

BORDEAUX, WASHINGTON: A HISTORIC THURSTON COUNTY GHOST TOWN

James S. Hannum, M.D.

Anyone wishing to take a leisurely drive through rural Thurston County should consider visiting the former headquarters of the Mason County Logging Company. Bordeaux, at the southeast edge of the Black Hills, is that place. Although it no longer exists as an organized community, the townsite may be the county's most interesting ghost town. This article attempts to correlate the artifacts still present there with the appearance of the town when the area was a thriving settlement.

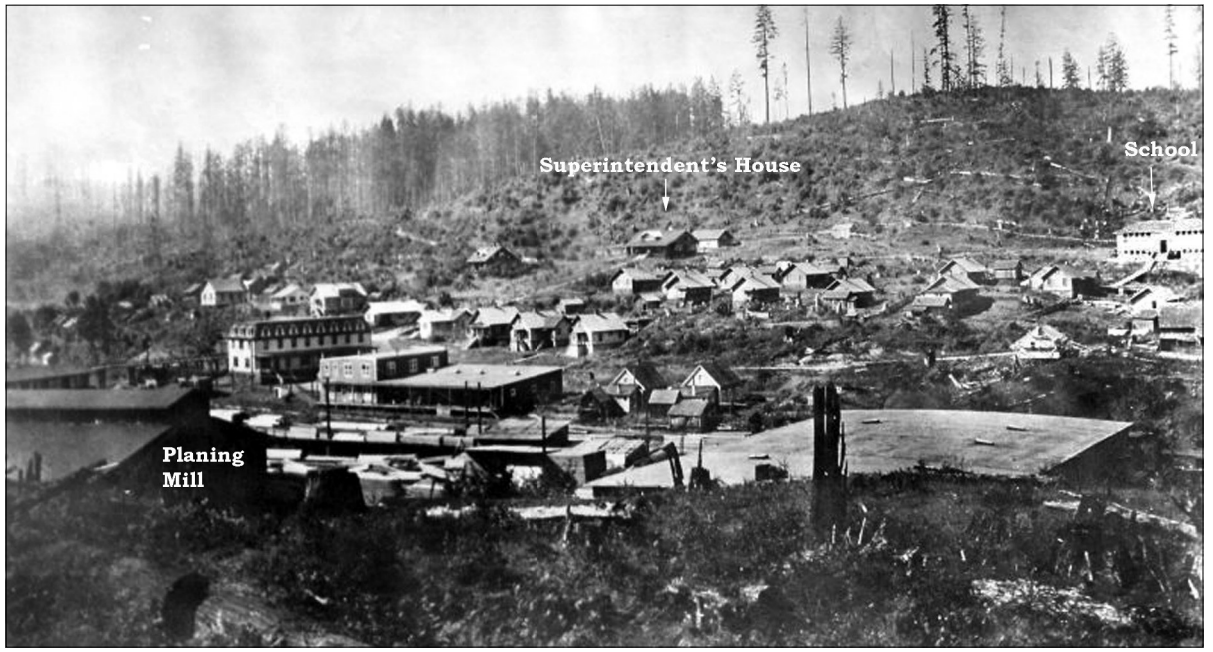


Image 1. A 1910 view toward the northwest at Bordeaux, from the personal collection of Robert W. Bordeaux, courtesy of Alan Mainwaring at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. The image may also be viewed online at https://www.flickr.com/photos/webduck/2488694454/in/photostream/ (accessed June 8, 2022).

Bordeaux was a company town. A brief recounting of the history of the Mason County Logging Company will provide the background for events that led to development of this community. The company was incorporated at Shelton, Washington on July 25, 1892 by Mark Draham and two brothers, Thomas and Joseph Bordeaux. The company continued to log in Mason County until 1909. However, in 1899, Draham sold his interest in the business, leaving the Bordeaux brothers as principal owners.[1]

A concise history of the Mason County Logging Company operation at Bordeaux appears in the September 25, 1941 issue of *The Daily Olympian*. The article reveals that the town was being closed down because there were no more harvestable logs nearby. "Mill Created Town—During the almost 50 years that the mill has been singing its song, a whole town has sprung up around it. At first there was just a

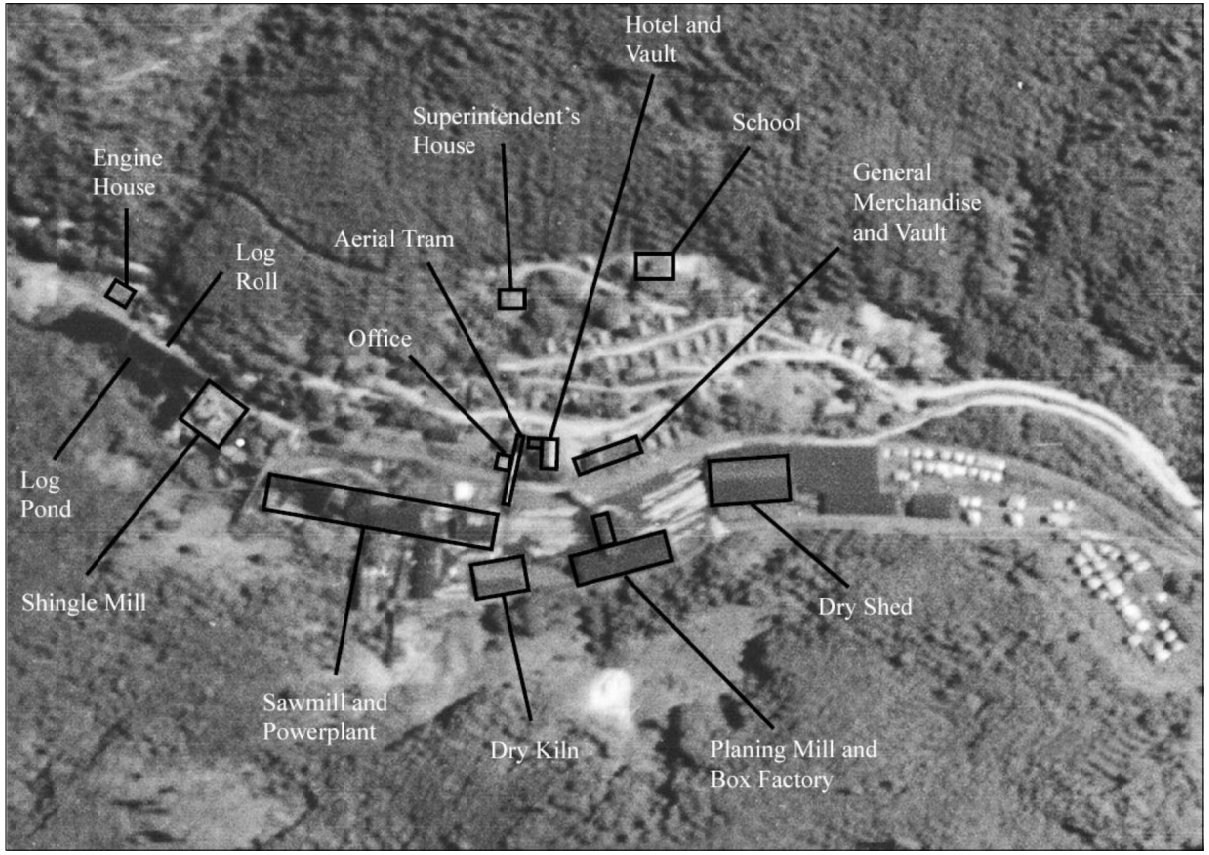


Image 2. A 1940 aerial photograph of Bordeaux from the United States Geological Survey, https://earthexplorer.usgs.gov/ (accessed June 8, 2022). The locations for various structures have been placed by the author.

camp. As operations expanded and more men were hired the company erected houses. A hotel was built. Several stores and a post office [which operated from 1903 to 1942[2]] were also erected. At one time there were 700 men working for the company and the other operations necessary for its industry.

"George Brazel, an Olympian who will be 84 years old this December, remembers the time when he supervised a total of 700 men at the operation. Brazel was the man who cut the first bush in that area.

"In the Summer of 1896, Brazel was hired by the logging company to cruise the area. He worked four months, and in the Fall of that year had run a survey eight miles in from the Northern Pacific tracks to South Cedar Creek.

"The survey completed, Brazel then worked for several years opening the Shelton camp for the Mason County Logging Company. In January, 1900, he was put in charge of a crew to grade a road where he had run his survey into the present Bordeaux area. The crews laid tracks into the woods for three miles, built the main camp where Bordeaux now is and in June of that year started logging.

"Brazel was foreman for several years, was later made superintendent of the operation, a position he held until the latter 1920's.

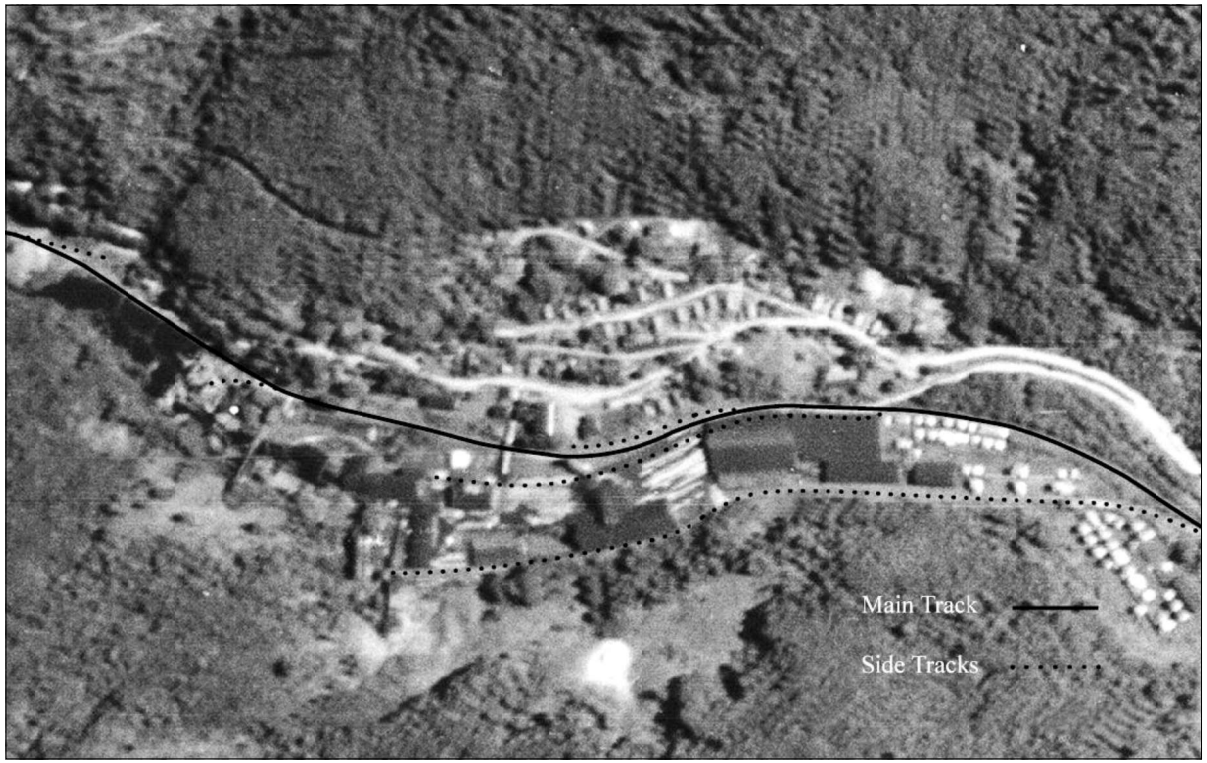
"Has Long History—A. H. Anderson, another pioneer lumberman, joined the Bordeaux brothers in building the town and the mills. Since the first log was out, the mills have been running practically without a break. Now they're all through.

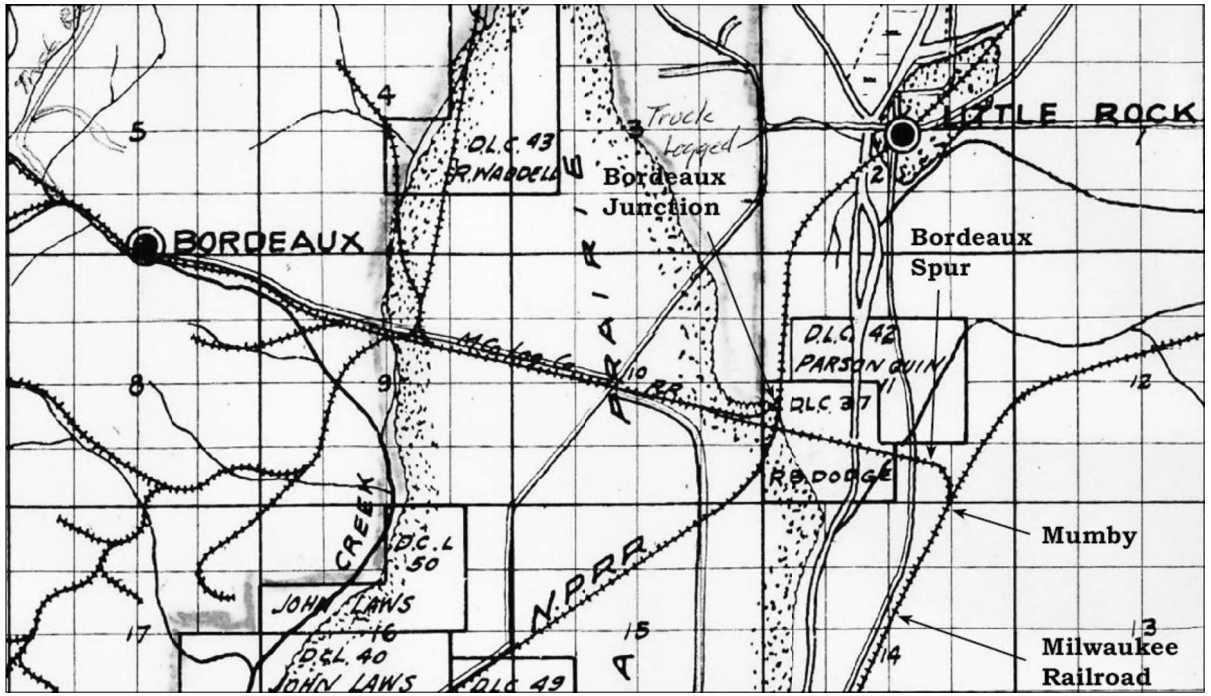
"And what about the town? The houses will still be there. But they'll be empty. It will be just another ghost town."[3]

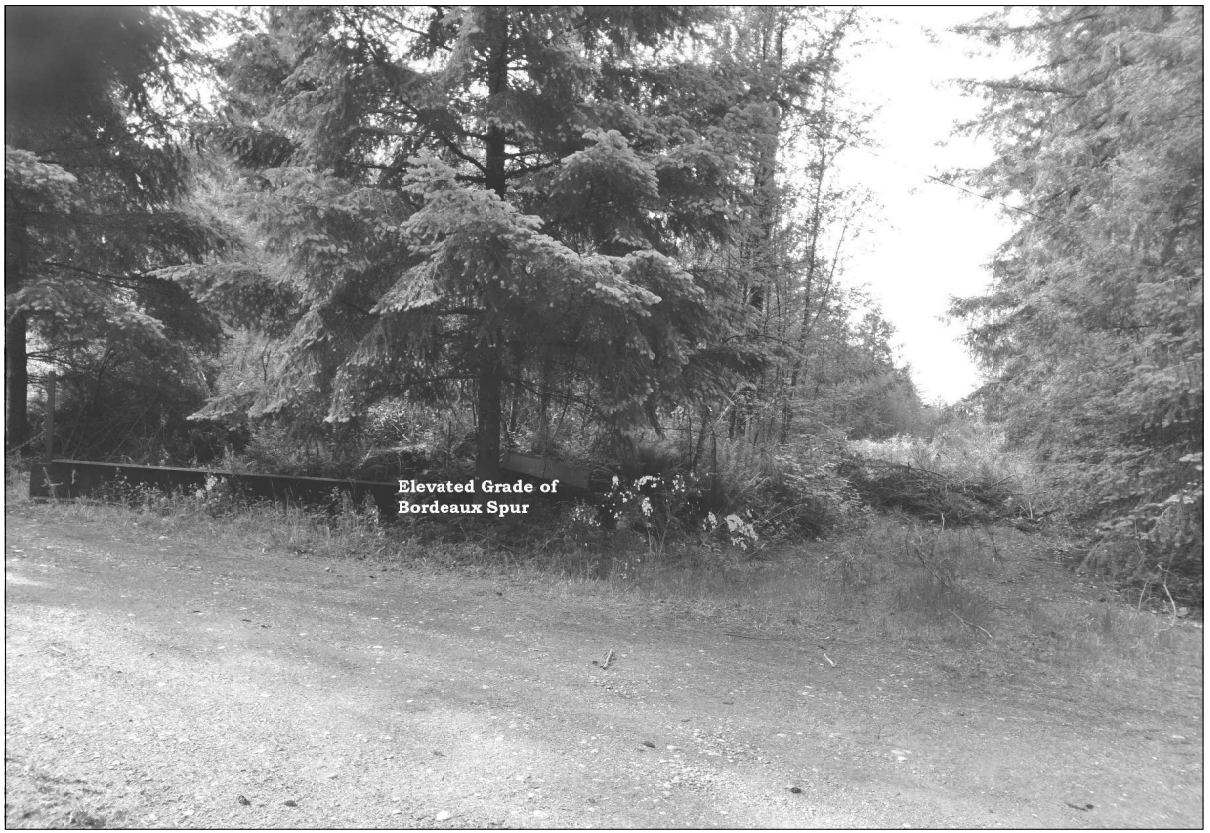
The last paragraph of this article proved to be in error. All the major mill buildings were dismantled shortly after operations ceased. Most of the other structures at Bordeaux also failed to survive. In an email dated May 31, 2002, Colleen Field Wedam (an amateur genealogist) reported that her uncle, Blaine H. McGillicuddy (who had been an engineer for the Mason County Logging Company) told her that many of the houses at Bordeaux were moved to Fort Lewis.

Before logging could begin in earnest, the Mason County Logging Company had to construct a set of railroad spurs giving access to its timber. That fact is reflected in the 1900 census for the Littlerock District of Thurston County. It contains entries for 22 men whose occupation was that of "Road Builder."[4] Although Bordeaux did not appear as a specific location in that census, there is no doubt that those 22 individuals were involved in the construction of the company's logging railroad.

The company's Thurston County railroad was eventually incorporated April


Main Track
Side Tracks


LITTLE ROCK
BORDEAUX
Bordeaux Junction
Bordeaux Spur
Truck looped
D.L.C. 43
D.L.C. 42
PARSON QUIN
D.L.C. 37
R.R. DODGE
D.L.C. 50
JOHN LAWS
D.L.C. 40
JOHN LAWS
D.L.C. 49
CREEK
Mumby
Milwaukee Railroad
N.P.R.R.



Opposite top: *Image 3. A 1940 aerial photograph of Bordeaux from the United States Geological Survey, https://earthexplorer.usgs.gov/ (accessed June 8, 2022). Various tracks of the Black Hills & Northwestern Railway (the logging line operated by the Mason County Logging Company) have been added by the author.*

Opposite bottom: *Image 4. Connections of the Black Hills & Northwestern Railway to the Northern Pacific Railroad and the Milwaukee Railroad. The base map is part of* Mason County Logging Co., Bordeaux, Wash., *drawn by Blaine H. McGillicuddy, Engineer, dated January 1, 1935, updated September 3, 1936 and December 24, 1940. From the collection of Alan Mainwaring at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.*

Above: *Image 5. Author's June 2022 photograph of a remnant of the Milwaukee Railroad's Bordeaux Spur. The location is near the abandoned Milwaukee mainline, at the place designated as Mumby in Image 4. The view is toward the south, at a position east of Littlerock Road, approximately 50 yards south of 14127 Littlerock Road.*

18, 1903 as the Black Hills & Northwestern Railway.[5] Although the track between Bordeaux and the Northern Pacific Railroad's Olympia to Gate mainline was owned by the logging railroad, the Northern Pacific had running rights over it. The interchange point between the Black Hills & Northwestern and the Northern Pacific was designated Bordeaux Junction.

Between May 1908 and May 1909, the Milwaukee Railroad surveyed a right-of-way for the planned construction of a new mainline between McKenna (in Pierce County, east of Yelm) and Helsing Junction (on the Chehalis River, southwest of Rochester). Tracklaying began late in 1909 and was completed by mid-1910. The Milwaukee built a short branch line to provide service at Bordeaux in 1911. It was labelled as Bordeaux Spur.[6] It originated from the new mainline at a place designated by the railroad as Mumby, and travelled almost due west, crossing under the

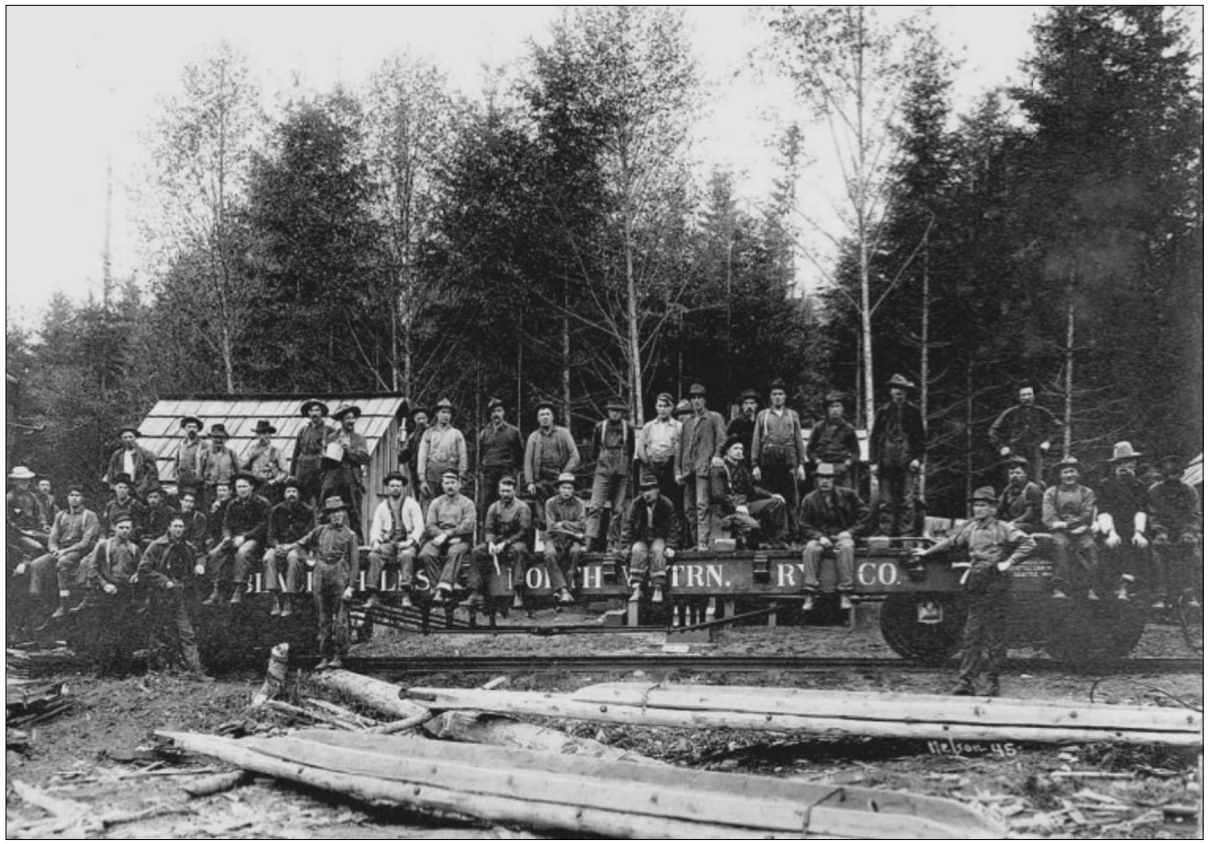


Image 6. Employees of the Mason County Logging Company posing around a Black Hills & Northwestern Railway flat car. Photograph courtesy of the University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, PH Coll 1320.3, Nelson 45, H. G. Nelson, photographer, date imprecise.

Northern Pacific's line between Olympia and Gate. Farther west, it terminated east of Mima Road at a junction with the Black Hills & Northwestern's track leading to Bordeaux Junction.

Late in 1930, the Mason County Logging Company signed an agreement with the Mud Bay Logging Company such that logs coming through Bordeaux could be hauled to the Mud Bay log dump for export.[7]

Much of the timber harvested in the Black Hills by the Mason County Logging Company was processed at Bordeaux. A separate corporation, the Mumby Lumber & Shingle Company, was formed on May 8, 1901 to oversee those operations. Its trustees were Thomas Bordeaux, F. R. Brown, and Samuel C. Mumby.[8]

In addition, other logs were initially hauled to Bordeaux Junction. There, they were transferred to the Northern Pacific which transported them north for export to other regional sawmills. Most of that timber passed through an Olympia log dump located north of the west end of the 4th Avenue Bridge.[9]

In 2022, it is possible to drive entirely through the former site of Bordeaux and not really notice that a town used to be there. There are three reasons why that is true. As mentioned earlier, almost no structures remain there. Second, a dense forest has grown up during the eight decades since the buildings were removed and, finally, aside from the road which passes through it (Bordeaux Road), the townsite is currently closed to off-road exploration.

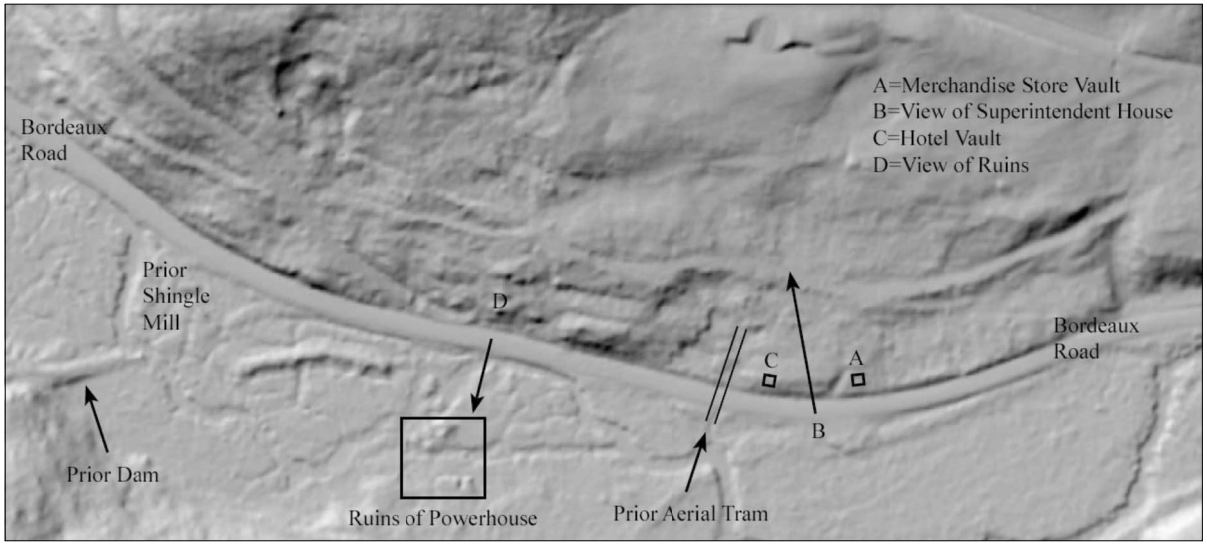


Image 7. A LiDAR (Laser Imaging, Detection, and Ranging) ground image of Bordeaux from the United States Geological Survey, https://earthexplorer.usgs.gov/ (accessed June 8, 2022).

However, one remaining artifact, the concrete vault that was built into the lowest level of the General Merchandise & Post Office building, is easily located (see Images 8 and 9). Using the vault as a reference point, the position of other artifacts can be specified. When travelling west along Bordeaux Road, look for this vault slightly uphill, immediately north of the road, approximately 300 yards west of the place where Bordeaux Road reaches the valley floor near Mima Creek. In Image 7, that location is labelled A.

Approximately 60 yards west along Bordeaux Road is the place where the image designated B in Image 7 was obtained. It is a view north and slightly east, toward the house which was occupied by the superintendent of the Bordeaux operation. Currently it is a private residence. (See Images 10 and 11.)

About 120 yards west of the General Merchandise & Post Office vault is another concrete vault. This one was used by the hotel at Bordeaux. Cur-

Image 8. Author's June 2022 photograph of the concrete vault used by the General Merchandise & Post Office building. The view is north from Bordeaux Road toward a place labelled A in Image 7.

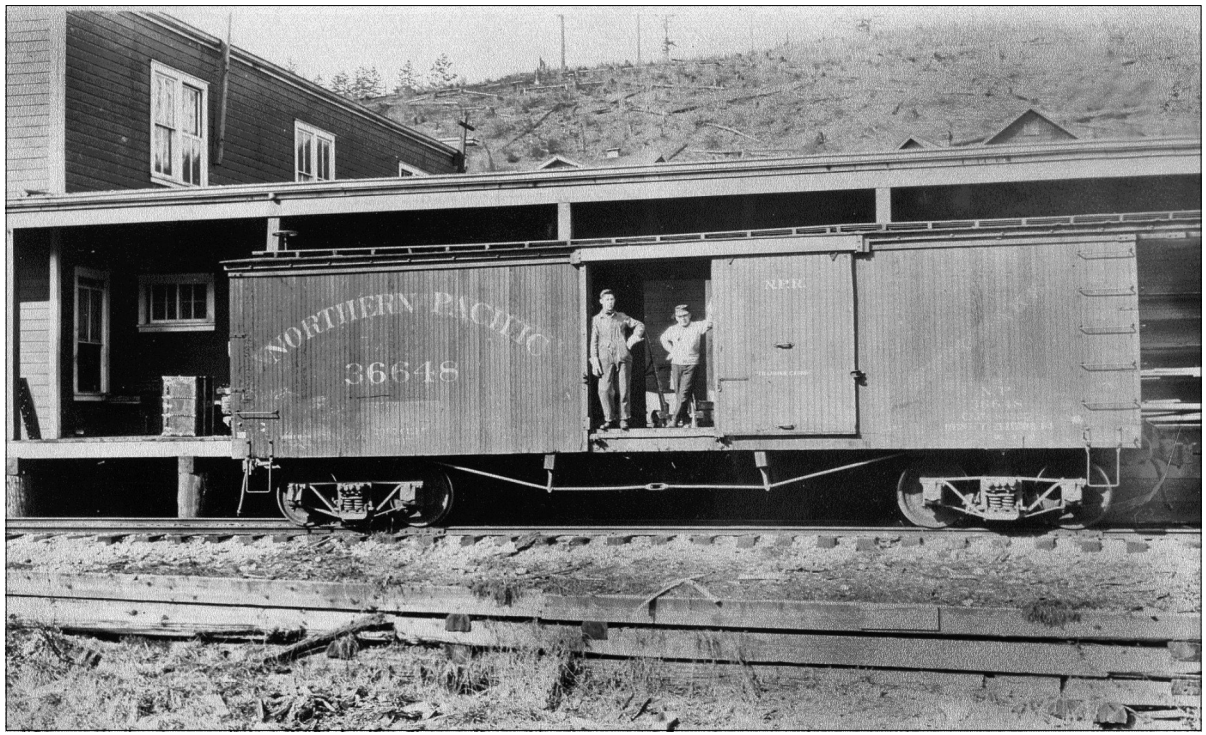


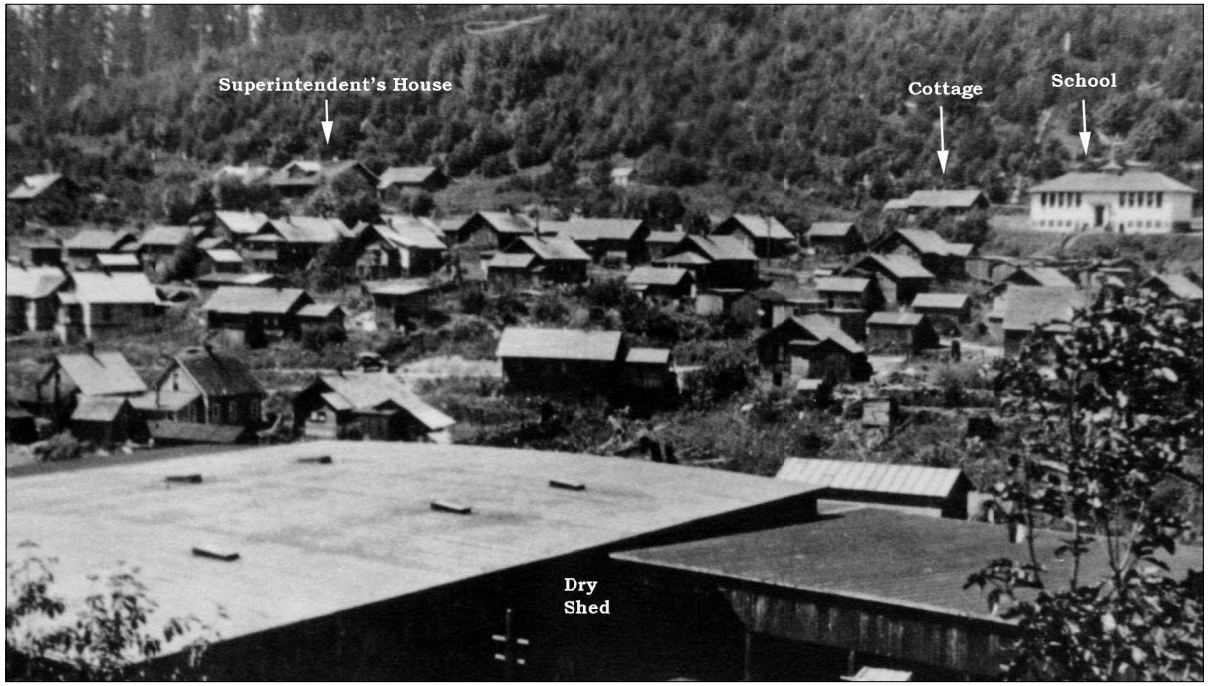
Image 9. A 1916 view north toward the back (south) side of the General Merchandise & Post Office building. Richard Costigan and Coots Johnson stand in the door of a Northern Pacific boxcar. Photograph from the collection of Vicki McKinnon, Washington State Digital Archives, https://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/Record/View/6B0EF44E273A8C52EB810BACE30C7AD5 (accessed June 11, 2022).

rently, it is completely covered in ivy (see Image 13). It is located at position C in image 7.

Farther west, Mima Creek approaches the south side of Bordeaux Road approximately 210 yards from the General Merchandise & Post Office vault. Heavy forestation south of the creek bed prevents visualization of the ruins farther south. Prominent among those artifacts are the mill's powerhouse and the base of a formerly tall smokestack used to burn sawdust.

At the far west end of the former townsite, when the mills there were active, Mima Creek was dammed in order to create a log pond. The dam extended southwest from the site of the shingle mill. In the years since the town was abandoned, the dam has deteriorated. Although the pond was still present in a 1951 aerial photograph, it had disappeared in a similar 1957 image. However, in 2022, the forest has still not fully reclaimed the area where the pond used to be. (See Images 17-A and 17-B.)

(continued on page 39)



***Above**: Image 12. Undated view toward the northwest showing the superintendent's house, the Bordeaux School, and the cottage next to the school. The image is part of the Blaine McGillicuddy Collection preserved by Alan Mainwaring at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.*

***Right**: Image 13. Author's June 2022 photograph of the concrete vault used by the Bordeaux Hotel. The view is toward the north from Bordeaux Road at a point labelled C in Image 7, 120 yards west of the vault visible in Image 8. The hotel vault is also visible in Image 33, made at the time the hotel was being dismantled.*

***Opposite top**: Image 10. Author's June 2022 photograph of the house built for the use of the superintendent of the mills at Bordeaux. The view is north and slightly east from Bordeaux Road. It was made at the point labelled B in Image 7.*

***Opposite bottom**: Image 11. Undated early photograph of the superintendent's house at Bordeaux, https://wisaard.dahp.wa.gov/Resource/13205/PropertyInventory/5764 (accessed June 11, 2022).*

***Above**: Image 14. Author's June 2022 photograph of the area containing the ruins of the powerhouse. Leaf cover prevents clear visualization of the ruins at the time of year when the image was made. However, Mima Creek can be seen in the foreground. The view is toward the south, from Bordeaux Road, at the place labelled D in Image 7. It is approximately 210 yards west of the General Merchandise & Post Office vault.*

***Right**: Image 15. A 2015 image displaying ruins of a smokestack, used to burn sawdust, located east of the powerhouse at Bordeaux. Reproduced with the permission of Mike Mander, http://www.mikemander.com/2015/06/gallery-ruins-of-bordeaux-wa.html (accessed June 11, 2022).*

Image 16. A 2015 image displaying ruins of the powerhouse at Bordeaux. Reproduced with the permission of Mike Mander, http://www.mikemander.com/2015/06/gallery-ruins-of-bordeaux-wa.html (accessed June 11, 2022).

(continued from page 35)
The Black Hills & Northwestern Railway maintained a two-stall engine house at the west end of Bordeaux. Rumor has it that the original structure burned. At any rate, a new, larger engine house was designed by A. Munster in June 1910.[10]

Several additional images (20 through 26) help to develop a picture of how Bordeaux used to look. The business entrance of the General Merchandise & Post Office building was on the north side of that structure (the previously described vault was at the opposite end).

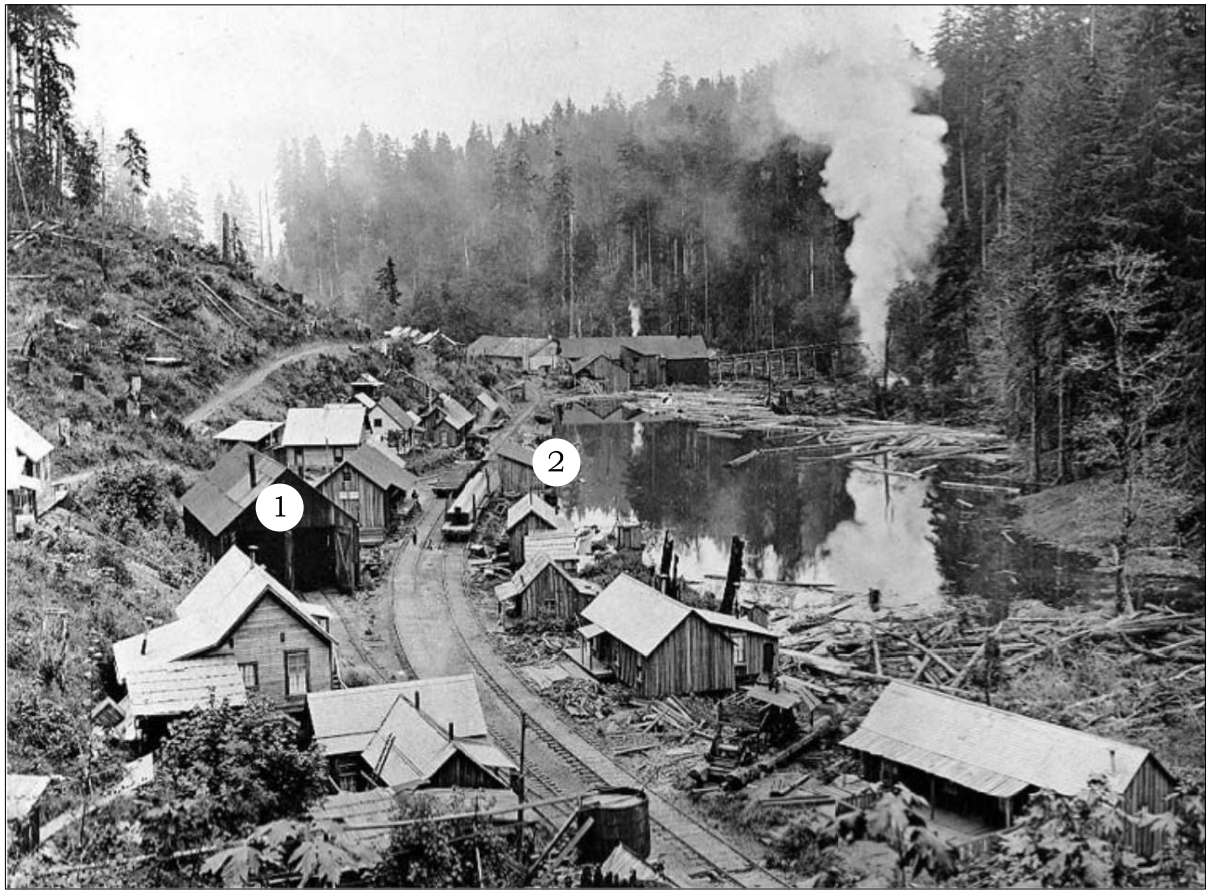
Immediately west of the hotel was an aerial tram road that carried automobiles and trucks across the railroad tracks, to the main mill buildings. Just west of the tram, on the north side of the main railroad track, was an office building that controlled the various operations at Bordeaux.

The dry shed was where finished lumber was stored before it was shipped

(continued on page 47)

Shingle
Mill Site
Former
Rollway
Former Log Pond

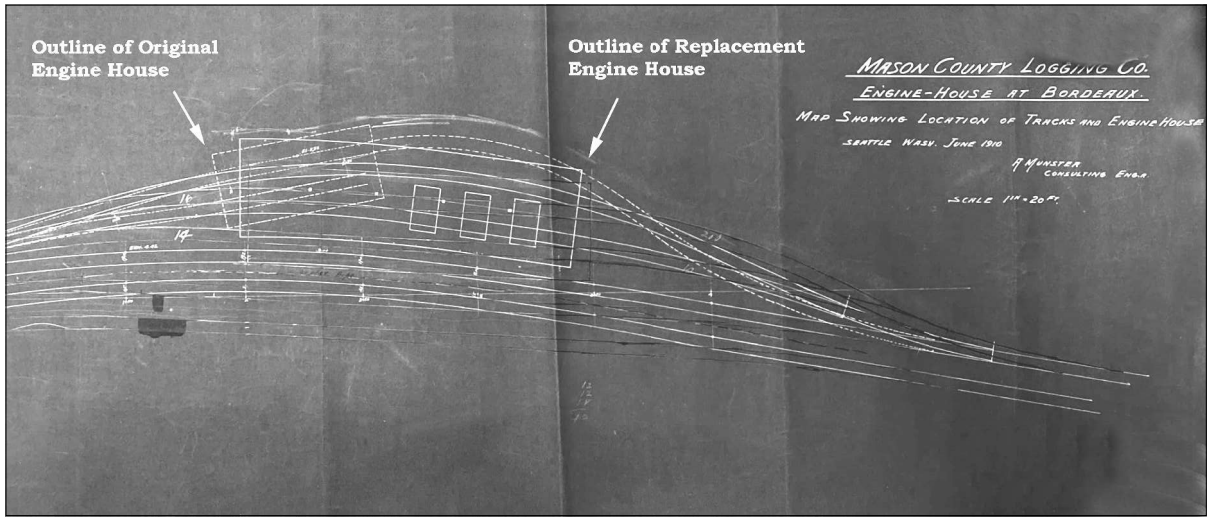
1
2

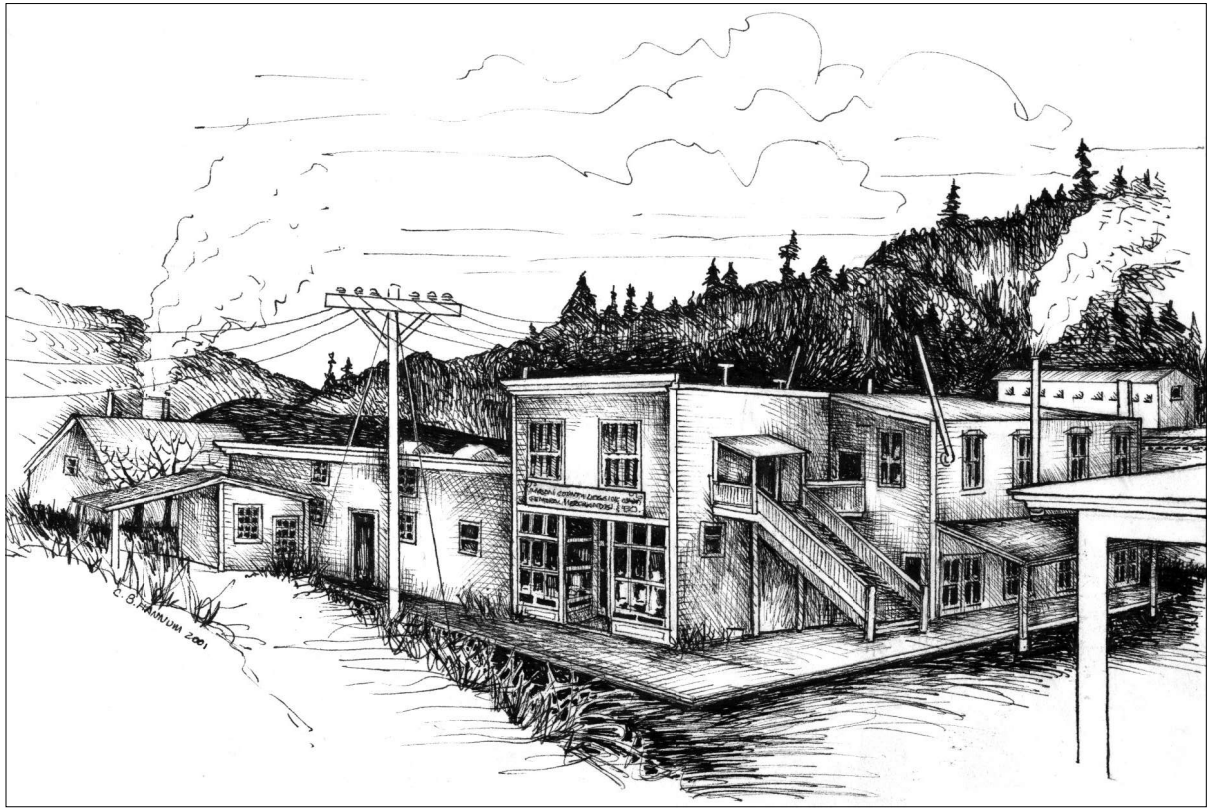


***Opposite above**: Image 17-A. Author's June 2022 photograph. The location is immediately north of the former log pond, at the west end of Bordeaux. The view is slightly south of east, along Bordeaux Road.*

***Opposite below**: Image 17-B. Undated view over the log pond. It was made facing the opposite direction from Image 17-A. Structures numbered 1 and 2 also appear in Image 18. This photograph comes from the personal collection of Peter J. Replinger.*

***Above**: Image 18. A 1904 view east across the log pond. This photograph was made from an uphill perch approximately 120 yards west of the place where the author's June 2022 Image 17-A was made. The structures numbered 1 and 2 in Image 17-B can also be seen. In 2022, Bordeaux Road occupies the old railroad grade. In the 1904 photograph, a two-stall engine house is visible across the tracks from the nearest edge of the log pond. The shingle mill is at the far end of the pond. Photograph courtesy of the University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Industries and Occupations Photographs, IND0169.*

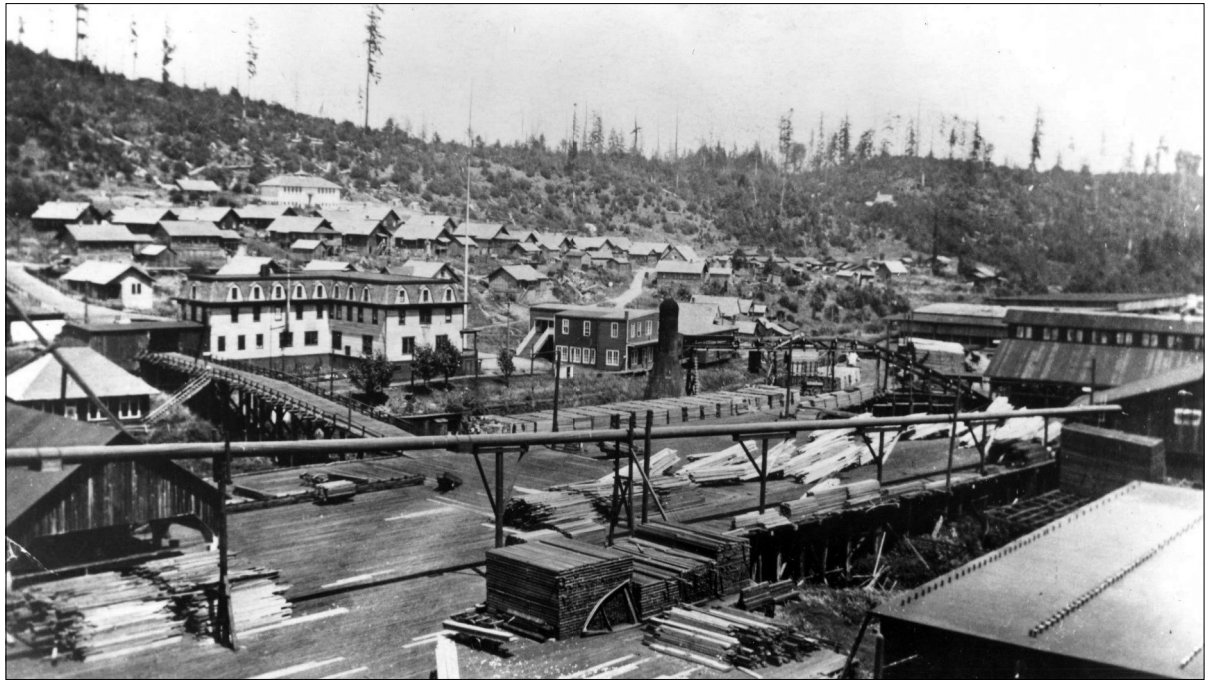

Outline of Original
Engine House
Outline of Replacement
Engine House
MASON COUNTY LOGGING CO.
ENGINE-HOUSE AT BORDEAUX.
MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF TRACKS AND ENGINE HOUSE
SEATTLE WASH. JUNE 1910
R. MUNSTER
CONSULTING ENG.R
SCALE 1IN.=20 FT.



***Opposite top**: Image 19. Part of blueprint plans for new engine house at Bordeaux. The footprint of the original structure can also be seen. The document is dated June 1910 and is from the collection of Bob Bordeaux.*

***Opposite bottom**: Image 20. Artist's conception of the view southwest toward the General Merchandise & Post Office building. In the lower right corner of the image, a small part of the porch on the east side of the hotel is visible. The sketch was made by Carol B. Hannum and first appeared in James S. Hannum, M.D.,* Gone But Not Forgotten, Abandoned Railroads of Thurston County, Washington *(Olympia, WA: Hannum House Publications, 2012), page 101.*

***Above**: Image 21. An undated view of the front of the General Merchandise & Post Office building at Bordeaux. It is part of the Blaine McGillicuddy Collection preserved by Alan Mainwaring at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.*



***Above**: Image 22. An undated view toward the northeast showing the hotel and General Merchandise & Post Office building at Bordeaux. The Bordeaux School is farther up the hill. From the area immediately west of the hotel, an aerial tram road carried traffic across the railroad to the mill buildings. From the tram, a stairway leads down to the office, where the mill managers worked. This photograph comes from the personal collection of Peter J. Replinger.*

***Opposite top**: Image 23. A 1910 image displaying the office, aerial tram road, and hotel at Bordeaux. The view is toward the northeast. Two men sit upon huge square timbers loaded on a flatcar spotted on a sidetrack, on the north side of the sawmill. Little of the main track is visible, where it passes just in front of the office. A small part of Mima Creek is visible in the lower left corner of the photograph. Photograph courtesy of the Washington State Historical Society, Catalog ID: C1948.18X.26.*

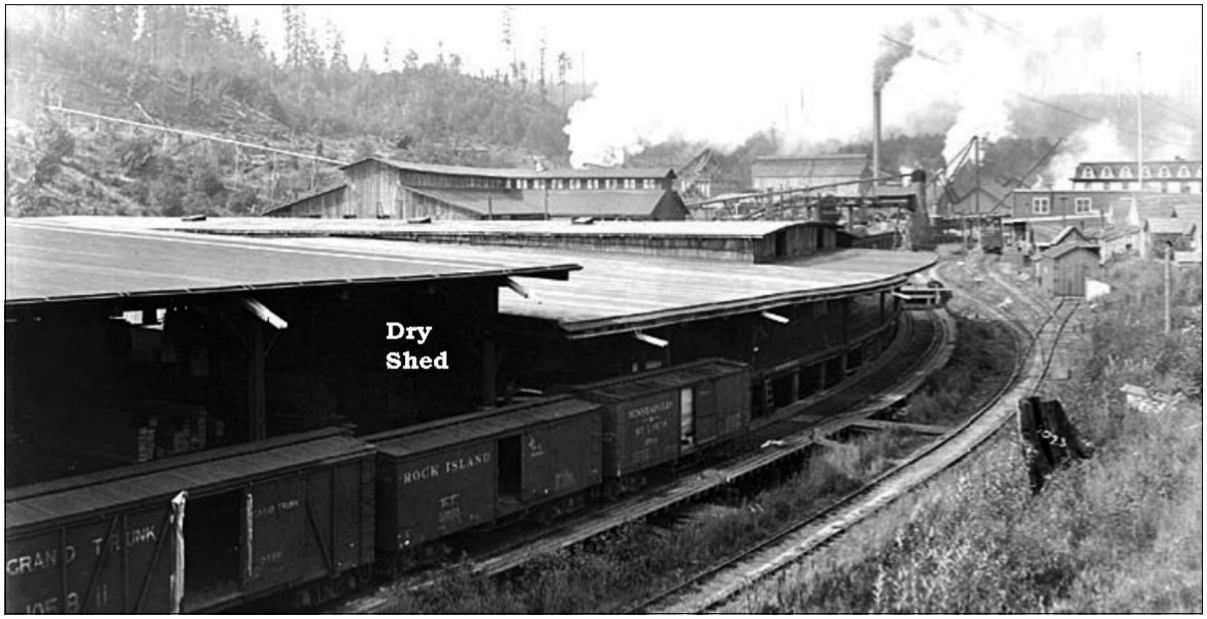
***Opposite bottom**: Image 24. Circa 1919 Clark Kinsey photograph of the interior of the office at Bordeaux. Photograph courtesy of the University of Washington Digital Archives, PH Coll 516.222.*

Office

CLARK KINSEY PHOTOG.
UNIV. OF WASH. LIBRARY

***Top**: Image 25. An undated view toward the east side of the Bordeaux Hotel. The background smoke is coming from the sawmill smokestack visible in Images 15 and 27. This photograph is part of the Blaine McGillicuddy Collection.*

***Bottom**: Image 26. An undated view north at the north end of the aerial tram road. Beyond the right side of the photograph was the location of the Bordeaux Hotel. The superintendent's house is visible in the distance. This photograph is part of the Blaine McGillicuddy Collection.*

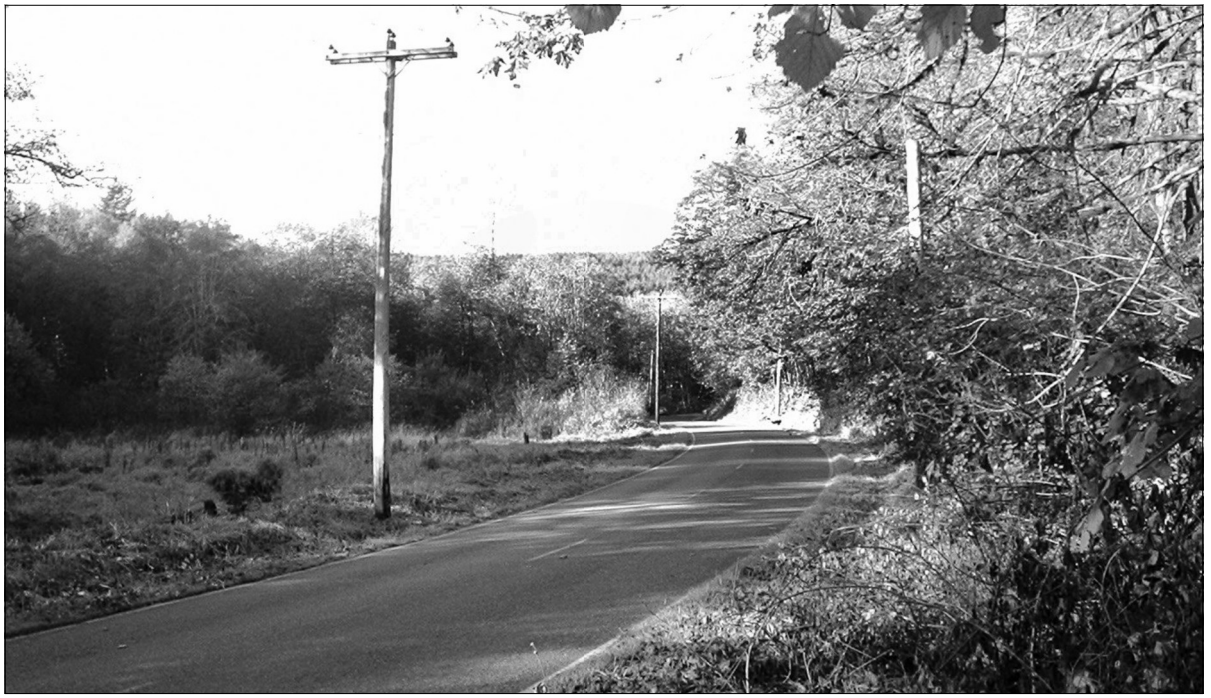


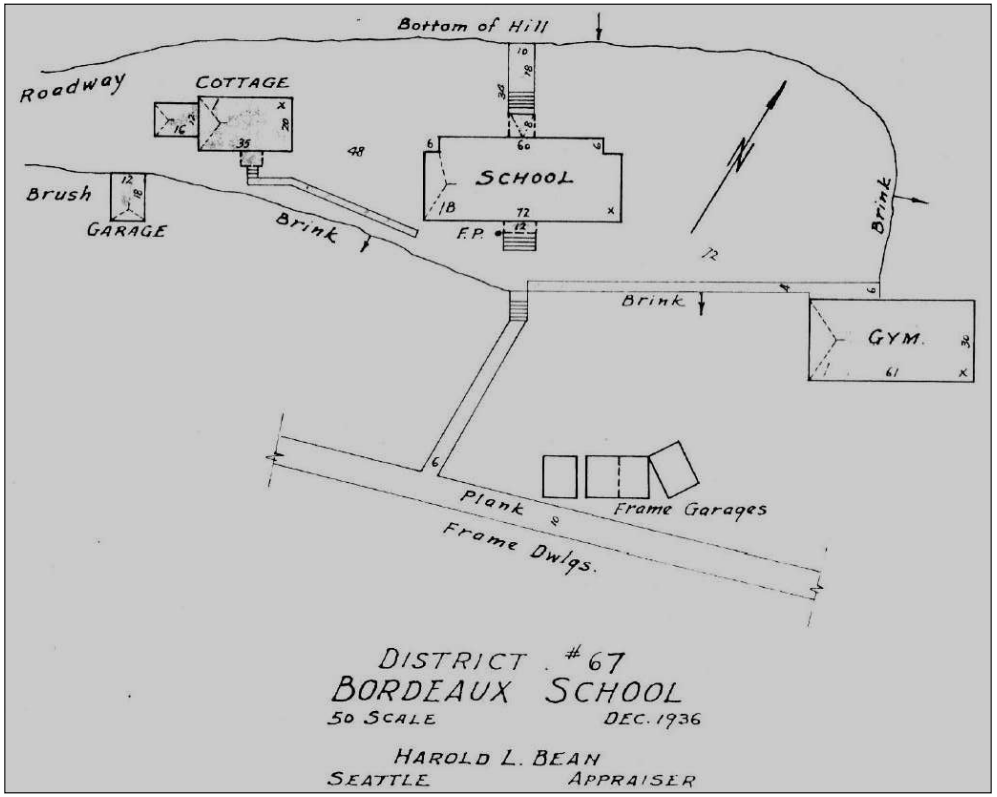
***Top**: Image 27. A circa 1919 Clark Kinsey photograph made in the eastern part of Bordeaux. The view is toward the west. In 2022, Bordeaux Road occupies the right-of-way where the main track of the Black Hills & Northwestern Railway lies in this image. In the distance can be seen the sawmill's tall smokestack, the General Merchandise & Post Office building, and the hotel. Photograph courtesy of the University of Washington Digital Libraries, PH Coll 516.198, image number 23.*

***Bottom**: Image 28. A circa 1942-43 view from approximately the same position as Image 27. This photograph was made at the time the mill was being demolished. Rails on both visible tracks have been replaced with wide timbers for use by trucks. Photograph courtesy of the University of Washington Digital Libraries, Special Collections, UW 41519.*

(continued from page 39)
to various customers. A side track ran along the north side of this structure and was used to load boxcars and flatcars.

In 1938, the Mason County Logging Company began to change from railroad logging to truck logging. Rails were removed from much of its re-




Bottom of Hill
Roadway
COTTAGE
SCHOOL
Brush
GARAGE
Brink
Brink
Brink
F.P.
GYM.
Plank
Frame Garages
Frame Dwlgs.
DISTRICT #67
BORDEAUX SCHOOL
50 SCALE
DEC. 1936
HAROLD L. BEAN
SEATTLE
APPRAISER

maining rail network and replaced with wide wooden timbers. From 1938 to 1941, logs for export to other mills continued to be hauled north, by rail, to the dump operated by the Mud Bay Logging Company. By the time the Bordeaux mill was dismantled, virtually all the rails had been removed, and only trucks were running on remaining rights-of-way.[11]

In addition to the superintendent's house, one other structure survived long after most of Bordeaux disappeared. The school still stood as late as 1994 and was intermittently used as a barn.[12] Thurston County historian Ed Echtle has reported that since then, the school has burned down.[13]

The Bordeaux Hotel was constructed with two wings at a right angle to each other. One wing was perpendicular to the main railroad track and contained the previously described concrete vault at the end near the railroad. The other wing was farther north and positioned parallel to the tracks. That parallel part had a prominent chimney, which has not survived.

The final image in this presentation was made from the north end of the aerial tram road that connected the main part of the town with the mill. It shows the relative positions of many of the mill buildings.

In 2022, it seems astonishing that so little remains of what was, at one time, a major part of the Thurston County economy. However, the images in this article will help the reader imagine what Bordeaux must have been like during the town's heyday.

NOTES

[1] James S. Hannum, M.D., *Gone But Not Forgotten, Abandoned Railroads of Thurston County, Washington* (Olympia, WA: Hannum House Publications, 2012), page 101.

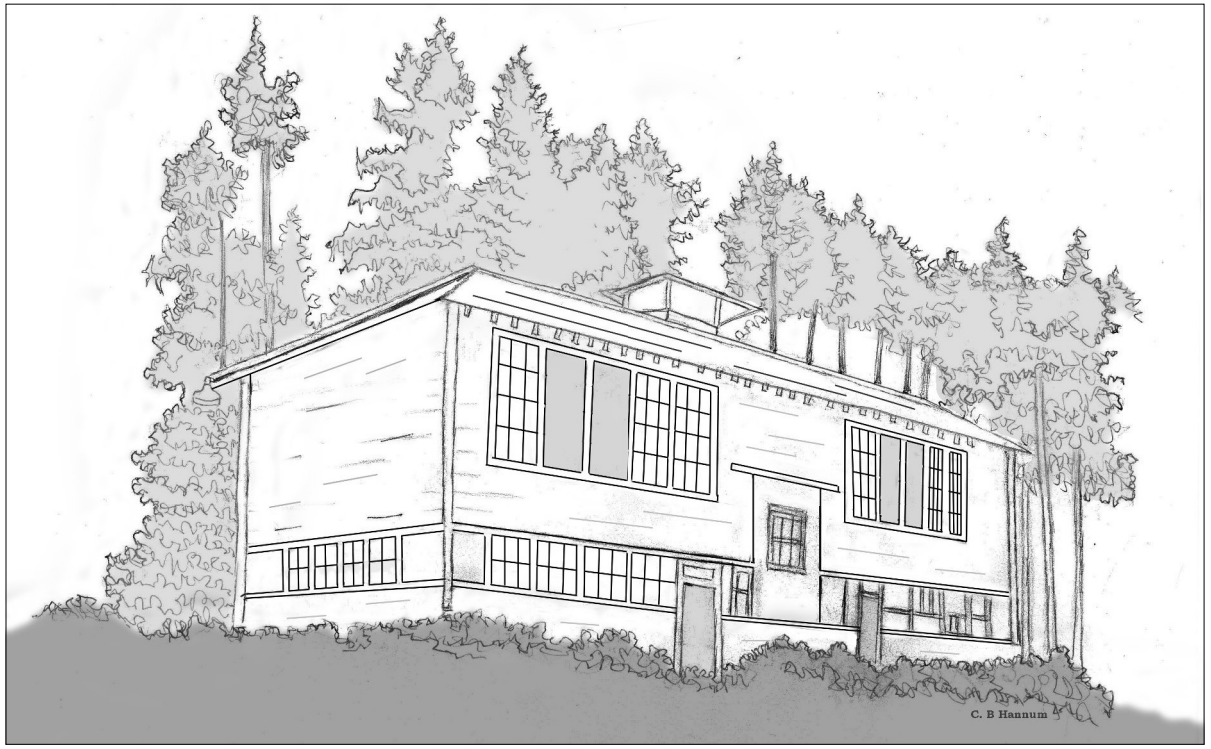
[2] Gayle Palmer and Shanna Stevenson, *Thurston County Place Names: A Heritage Guide* (Olympia, WA: Capitol City Press, 1992), page 7.

[3] "Bordeaux Mill Puffs Last Smoky Farewell To Half-Century-Long Saga of Singing Saws," *The Daily Olympian*, September 25, 1941, pages 1 and 2.

[4] "United States Census, 1900," *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-DH7Q-YV3?cc=1325221&wc=9B7F-82J%3A1030550101%2C1032284601%2C10322988

***Opposite top**: Image 29. Author's 2010 photograph made from approximately the same position as Images 27 and 28.*

***Opposite bottom**: Image 30. A 1936 fire insurance company map of the school buildings at Bordeaux. The document is archived at the University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections,* Thurston County Schools*, Northwestern Mutual Fire Association, 979.746 N819t.*


C. B Hannum

***Opposite top**: Image 31. A circa 1942-43 view northwest toward the Bordeaux School. Two remaining private residences are visible. Photograph courtesy of the University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW 41516.*

***Opposite bottom**: Image 32. An artist's conception of the Bordeaux School circa 1994. Image created in 2022 by Carol B. Hannum.*

***Above**: Image 33. A circa 1942-43 view of the Bordeaux Hotel as it was being removed. The view is toward the southeast. The chimney still stands and the vault can be seen at the left side of the photograph. The railroad right-of-way can be seen in front of the trees in the lower right side of the image. Photograph courtesy of the University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW 41518.*

***Page 52**: Image 34. A circa 1942-43 view south along the aerial tram road. The roof has been removed from the office. A bit farther away, the tram railings begin. The smokestack and powerhouse are noted. Photograph courtesy of the University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW 41517.*

01 : 5 August 2014), Washington> Thurston>ED 224 Gate City, Grand Mound, Little Rock, Meadow, and Rochester Precincts > images 16-26.

[5] Hannum, page 101.

[6] *I.C.C. docket no. 17021: Investigation of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Company. History of the Construction of the Lines West of Mobridge, South Dakota, by Valuation Sections and Subsidiary Companies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, n.d.), pages 146-149.

[7] Hannum, page 101.

[8] *Articles of Incorporation of the Mumby Lumber & Shingle Company*, Number 9671, filed May 8, 1901, Washington State Archives.

[9] Hannum, page 101.

[10] *Mason County Logging Co. Engine-House at Bordeaux. Map Showing Location of Tracks and Engine House*, Seattle, Wash. June 1910, A. Munster, Consulting Engr. From the collection of Allan Mainwaring, Washington State Department of Natural Resources.

[11] Hannum, pages 101-105.

[12] Kenneth A. Erickson, *Lumber Ghosts, A Travel Guide to the Historic Lumber Towns of the Pacific Northwest* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company, 1994).

[13] Interview with Ed Echtle, May 31, 2022.

Dr. Hannum is a retired physician and surgeon who arrived in western Washington in 1971. Railroad history has been a life-long interest, and he has written several books on the subject.